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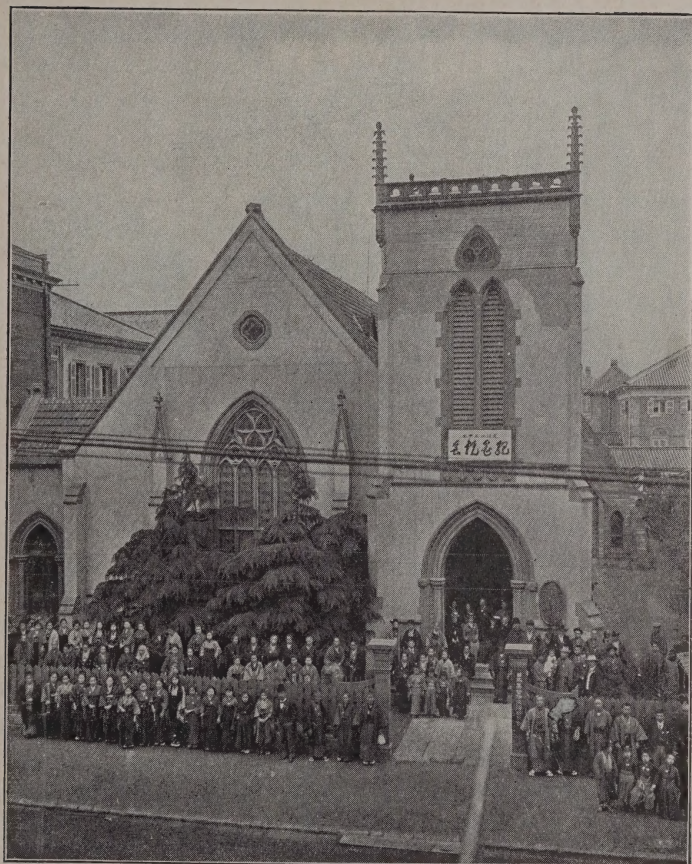
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306

SHINONOME:

Day-Dawn, or the Beginnings of the Kingdom
of God in Japan.

BY JAMES H. BALLAGH, D.D.



KAIGAN CHURCH, YOKOHAMA.

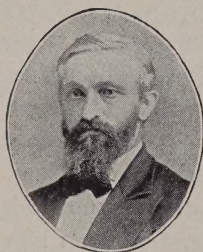
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SHINONOME:

Day-Dawn, or the Beginnings of the Kingdom of God in Japan.

JAMES H. BALLAGH, D. D.



Arriving in Japan the 11th of November, 1861, I found Drs. Hepburn and Brown with their families, residing in a Buddhist temple at Kanagawa, the treaty port in this eastern part of Japan.

Regular worship on Sabbaths and week days had been early established by the missionaries two years before my arrival.

Those services were commenced in Dr. Hepburn's temple residence, *Jio Butsuji*, by himself and Rev. J. L. Nevius, a Presbyterian missionary from China, and Dr. Brown continued to hold them after his arrival. They were attended by a few civilians and seafaring men who came over from Yokohama for worship. Later on, for the convenience of such persons, the services were transferred to Yokohama. On my arrival I found them held in the parlors of Sir Rutherford Alcock, the English Minister, the Legation being at that time on Main Street on the Homura side of the Settlement. Here they were continued till the erection of the English Church; both the material structure and the ecclesiastical organization being largely fostered by Dr. Brown. Later, the American and dissenting members of the community met in the American Consulate, and later still, in Dr. Hepburn's newly opened dispensary-chapel, 39 Water Street, Yokohama. Here, on the removal of all foreigners to Yokohama because of the closing of the Port of Kanagawa as a place of residence or business,

early in 1863, the few foreign children, a half a dozen at most, were gathered in a Sunday-school. This was the beginning of what afterwards grew into the present flourishing Union Church Sunday-school.

Japanese Sunday-school classes were of later origin, as were also public services in that tongue, owing to the yet unremoved edicts against Christianity. Christian truth was taught, and copies of the Scriptures in Chinese were given to persons to read, but never in the presence of a third party. The possession of a "false religion" book would have been criminal. Copies given by Dr. Hepburn to medical students were carefully concealed and speedily returned. Translation of the Scriptures was not undertaken till 1863-4, first, of St. John's Gospel, with a shaven-headed priest, Yano Riuzan, as teacher. The object of the pupil was to save his teacher's soul thereby. This man had been furnished Dr. Brown as a teacher, by the Japanese Government, and was passed over to teaching others of Dr. Brown's family. He was assigned to me soon after my arrival. I found him well versed in the Buddhist sects, and from him gained much information concerning all the leading sects as well as the ranks, revenues, provinces, castle-towns, etc., of the two hundred and more Daimyos of the Empire. His work in translation was writing out, in easy Japanese, the meaning of the Chinese text, which was not difficult for him to understand, and it gave full opportunity for imparting truth to his mind. When nearly through this enjoyable task, it occurred to me we had failed to ask the Divine help in our work. I communicated this fact to him, and he acknowledged its importance. So entering a rear room and closing the paper sliding-doors to prevent discovery, I offered my first Japanese prayer. I can never forget the delightful impression of this, a new way, opened up to the throne of grace. The teacher, as well as myself, was evidently impressed. Meeting Dr. Hepburn on the Bund later, I told him of the circumstance and my experience of delight, and he heartily congratulated me.

The teacher, being in failing health from consumption, was, not long after this event, confined to his couch at Kanagawa,

where I often visited him, taking him delicacies and a soft pillow, reading to him out of St. John's Gospel and offering prayer. One day after so doing, I was led to explain a Sunday-school picture of the Ethiopian eunuch. On reading the Scripture passage and of the baptismal scene, to my great surprise he said, "I would like to be baptized." I say "surprise," for the thought of baptism had not entered my mind, one reason being that I had never administered the rite, and, doubtless a more potent one, that the law forbade all profession of Christianity. Whether right or wrong, my instinct was to obey law. I asked why he wished to be baptized. "Can you not be saved without it? Was not the penitent thief saved?" His reply was, "Yes, but I want to do whatever Jesus tells us to do." That settled the point, so I said, "I will consult Dr. Hepburn, an experienced elder, and better versed in the language, and if he approves, it shall be done."

On the following Sabbath afternoon, Nov. 4th, 1864, accompanied by Dr. Hepburn, we crossed over to Kanagawa and the doctor kindly and carefully examined Yano as to his knowledge and faith. He said that he had examined many candidates for admission to the church, but had seldom found one more satisfactory. He advised his baptism then and there. I informed Yano that it was a breach of the law, but he replied that was a matter of small importance. I then consulted the son, a young man, saying his father would soon be beyond the reach of the law, but not so himself nor the family; what had he to say about his father's baptism? He replied, "If my father wishes to be baptized, I consent to it. I will do anything to please him." Then he added, "I think he ought to be baptized because ever since he has been sick, his friends have besought him to pray to the idols, saying if he did not, he would die; to which my father replied he did not care if he did die, he would not worship idols." With this firm endorsement, the ordinance was administered; the son, a daughter and the step-mother being witnesses. Dr. Hepburn offered probably his first Japanese prayer, and a very full one. Yano's death occurred just one month later, Dec. 4th, and he was buried with Buddhist

rites from Jio Butsuji temple where Dr. Hepburn and I had once lived. My last visit with my wife to see him was on Thanksgiving Day, and on taking our leave, he thanked us each in turn, saying he could never repay us for favors rendered, but he was going to Jesus and he would make mention to Him of our names. This was the overwhelming reward for leaving home and country to lead one soul of Japan's millions to the Lord Jesus; and this probably the first in modern times!

The immediate effect of Yano's baptism was very great, especially upon Dr. Hepburn, a very undemonstrative man. He said that night at the monthly concert of prayer held in his own parlor, "After my knowledge of how long missionaries in China waited for their first convert, and in view of the fact of the first fruit already gathered in Japan after so short a time, I believe that if the edict against Christianity were removed all Japan might be converted as one man." These startling words, coming from such a man as Dr. Hepburn, bore fruit at the subsequent week of prayer, January, 1865. The Colonel of the English regiment of marines, then stationed at Yokohama, an earnest Christian man, recalling the statement, proposed that the missionaries draw up a petition addressed to the Evangelical Alliance, to incorporate in the call for the next week of prayer, a request for prayer for the removal of the edict prohibiting Christianity, and that a circular be sent to Christian people in all lands, asking prayer for the same purpose. This was approved by all present, and a circular drawn up by Dr. S. R. Brown was widely disseminated. We have reason to believe that it was in direct connection with this petition that the edict was removed; for it is said that when Prince Iwakura and the present Marquis Ito were visiting the western governments, seeking revision of the treaties with their country, this edict and its affront to Christian nations was everywhere brought to their attention, and in consequence they made representations to their government looking to its removal.

But before this happy result had come, another event of importance had occurred, viz: the organization of the first Protestant Christian Church in Japan, on the 10th of March, 1872.

This took place in the little stone lecture-room adjoining the present Kaigan Church, on Com. Perry's treaty-ground, near the English Hatoba.

During the nearly eight years intervening twixt these two events—the baptism of Yano, and the organization of the first church—several other persons had been baptized. Three of these were baptized privately by Dr. G. F. Verbeck in Nagasaki, on the Day of Pentecost, May 20th, 1866. They were, Messrs. Murata, Wakasa no Kami, karo or chief officer to the Prince of Hizen; Ayabe, Murata's brother; and Motonon, a faithful retainer of Murata and also father of the present Judge Motonon of the Hague Peace Conference. Two Buddhist priests had been also baptized by Episcopal missionaries, and though they suffered imprisonment for their faith, yet they did not fulfil the hopes entertained of them. At Yokohama, also, five persons, four men and one woman, had been baptized—all publicly. The first two to be publicly baptized, May, 1868, were private pupils of J. H. Ballagh, the first fruits of his teaching and preaching services held Sabbath days in his parlors for pupils, servants and others. As his home had been destroyed by fire, Nov. 1866, the baptisms took place in Dr. Hepburn's dispensary. In the following year Rev. D. Thompson baptized Ogawa Yoshiyasu and Suzuki Kojiro, one a teacher and the other a pupil, and an old widow lady of Kanagawa. One who witnessed these first public baptisms, seizing the hand of the preacher, said "I am so glad Jesus has disciples in Japan who love Him just as you do!"

At the organization of the church, only two of all these were present; these were, Mr. Ogawa, Mr. Thompson's teacher, who in his absence had fallen to me; and Mr. Niimura, one of the two Buddhist priests who had been baptized at Nagasaki. The latter was chosen deacon, while Mr. Ogawa was chosen elder of the infant church, by the nine young men who were all members of my day-school for English, held in the stone chapel of the now Kaigan Church. Their conversion and confession of Christ and organization into a church bearing His glorious name was wholly and markedly of Divine interposi-

tion. It originated, like the church in Jerusalem at Pentecost, in a period of prayer accompanied by the powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit's presence, not in outward signs but in the hearts of His children, in their all prophesying and "speaking with new tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

To explain a little more fully: in my school, which was free, and composed of 25 or 30 young men all samurai and coming from various clans and all quarters of the land, it was my custom to open with a Bible lesson and exposition, followed by a prayer. I think an abridged Shorter Catechism which I had cut on blocks in Japanese, was also taught, and special note had been made of the Week of Prayer during the one or two years of the school's existence. An interesting pupil, Shinozaki, noted for his humility and general good will, had been persuaded by ambitious relatives and friends to accept an invitation to be taken by a merchant to America and be trained up for a business career. He came to me to consult about this invitation. On full consideration, I approved thereof; but he did not seem satisfied, and asked me why I had come to Japan. I frankly told him, "To lead the Japanese to Christ." He then said that if I, a stranger, had left my home and country for such a purpose, he did not feel it right for him to leave his own people and go abroad for his own profit, but that he ought to stay and help me. At this surprising declaration I said, "Why Shinozaki, if that is your view, then by no means go abroad, but stay and help by all means, and God will bless you in your deed." I then told him how God had led me to give up very flattering and loved prospects of business in America, and how He blessed me in consequence, and I felt sure He would bless him as well. He departed from me very happy at his decision being so heartily approved. He it was who came to me at the beginning of the Chinese New Year, early in Feb., 1872, or the 5th year of Meiji, and asked if the pupils could have the use of the school-room at the noon hour for a meeting. I asked what kind of a meeting. He replied, "A prayer meeting." The pupils had observed that foreigners held a week of prayer at their New Year for the world, and they thought they should

do so for their own country, Japan. Approving the measure I was asked if I would come. I consented, and without knowing how I was led thereto, I wrote upon the blackboard in large English letters, "UNTIL THE SPIRIT BE POURED UPON US FROM ON HIGH."

It would seem that no sooner was this done than the promise in Isaiah 65:24 was fulfilled; "And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." I had prayed, and probably Ogawa also, though I do not remember, owing to the remarkable fact that followed, viz: four or five prayers in quick succession, the speakers all unknown to me except as I might surmise by the tones of voice. This fact was overwhelming to me for two reasons; one was, I had never experienced a revival at home—never had seen a manifestation of the Holy Spirit's power as "a Spirit of grace and supplication," and I was to experience it for the first in Japan! Then again, the thought of these young men who had never before uttered a true prayer, now calling upon the God of Israel, and witnessing to their faith in the crucified, risen and glorified Son of God—the Lord Jesus Christ, who for centuries had been defamed by Japan—this fact was too oppressive for my spirit, save as it found relief in "strong crying and in tears." Thus the Week of Prayer continued for that week, and the next, and onward, till three months had passed swiftly by, when my spirit, exhausted by the strain, was relieved by my brother Thompson's return to Japan. He was able to take up and for a time carry forward the work, which had now so increased that the little school-chapel had become too strait, and the Sabbath services were held in Dr. Hepburn's new chapel on Water Street.

It was in the midst of these scenes, Sabbath P. M., March 10th, 1872, that "The Church of Christ in Japan" was organized with eleven members, nine having been baptized that day. Rev. Dr. S. R. Brown, the senior member of the Mission, was present and took part in the services. Dr. J. C. Hepburn and Rev. David Thompson of the Presbyterian Mission, would undoubtedly have been with us also, had they been in the coun-

try at that time. But the former was in Shanghai, superintending the printing of his now famous dictionary; and the latter was on a tour through the Occident with a party of Japanese gentlemen for whom he acted as interpreter. One of these gentlemen was Mr. Kataoka Kenkichi, who afterwards became the distinguished Christian statesman and President of the Lower House of Parliament. Besides the families of Dr. Brown and myself, there were also present the three lady representatives of the Women's Union Board of Missions, Mrs. Mary Pruyn, Mrs. Louisa H. Pierson and Miss Julia Crosby, who participated in the Communion service that followed.

The name of the church, the few essential articles of faith, the form of government and order of officers were all either of their own selection or approval, and the entire government was from the first in their own hands, save as they sought advice and assistance from the servants of Christ who had called them into spiritual being. Two objects were held distinctly in view: the independence of the church from its birth, and the unity of all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth. Hence the rejection of all denominational names and alliances, and the almost partisan spirit, or at least, holy jealousy, for the name of their Lord and Master. So earnest were these first members of the body of Christ for union that a committee appointed by them waited upon the representatives of the different missionary societies then coming into Japan, to unite with them in the formation of one undivided body of Christian brethren in Japan. And much of the church legislation since, has been in that direction; and the very large and practical union of affiliated bodies and societies undoubtedly owes its origin and inspiration to the same gracious and Divine interposition.

It would be interesting and encouraging to follow the subsequent history of this hopeful beginning of church life, and to trace more fully the lives of these first members and those soon associated with them, but that would transcend my purpose in this brief sketch. It may suffice to say, as showing its formative tendency, that within a year thereafter, a second church

was formed, consisting of seven members of the original church in Yokohama, with Elder Ogawa, and as acting pastor Rev. David Thompson, and constituting the *Shinsakae* Church, in Tsukiji, Tokyo. Other churches in the capital branched off from that, and in country places, a still greater number probably from the Yokohama Church; and in time, branches sprang up in places far removed from both these sources of origin.

The basis of a Presbytery was established at the first division, or setting off of the Tsukiji Church, by an agreement on its part to meet twice a year by its elders, with those of the Yokohama Church, to consult and act on all matters of common interest. These presbyteries, now numbering six or more, and covering all parts of the Empire, have long since had their representative Synod or General Assembly, and their own Boards of Home and Foreign Missions. "The little one has become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation;" and the comfort of it all is, it is because of Him who said, "I, Jehovah, will hasten it in its time." Isa. 60:22.

Two encouraging facts might well be noted. The first is that nearly every one of the first members became influential and devoted workers. There were several, it is true, who soon disappeared, or failed to realize the hopes entertained on their behalf. Possibly one was a deceiver or deceived, and one of those previously baptized did not long retain his connection with the church or his Christian faith. But others, as pastors Ogawa and Okuno, Honda, Ibuka, Uemura, Oshikawa became elders, and as editors, educators or in some other public capacity, have had long and honorable lives of usefulness and influence. Several, quite early, passed to their reward; as the beloved and lamented Shinozaki, in 1876. Others of them have had useful lives in other communions of Christ's followers, the mother-church, by her catholicity of spirit, being willing to help, through her sons and daughters (in the latter having been greatly blessed owing to the number and efficiency of tributary Mission Girls' Schools) all sister churches of whatever name, laboring for the establishing of Christ's Kingdom in Japan. Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists and others

have shared in these benefits. Several pastors of the Methodist Protestant Church, and Bishop Honda of the Methodist Church, one of the charter members of the Kaigan Church of Yokohama, are notable examples. Nor has the church failed in services to the country in her contribution of Christian statesmen; examples being two of the early presidents of the Lower House of Parliament, Messrs. Kataoka Kenkichi and Nakajima, both removed too soon for their country's welfare, from their places of influence. Others are wielding influence as editors and statesmen; as Shimada Saburo, long Yokohama's eloquent representative in Parliament and also editor of one of the great papers.

The other encouraging fact concerns the principle of union. The example of coöperation in labor for the building up of a strong and united body of believers in Japan, early set by the members of the Reformed and Presbyterian Missions, and resulting in a Council of Seven Co-operating Missions, all striving together to build up the "Nihon Kirisuto Kyokwai," led to a similar union between American, English and Canadian Episcopal Missions in labor for the "Nihon Seikokwai" and the three American Methodist Missions—Northern, Southern and Canadian, in aid of the "Nihon Methodist Kyokwai." A like union is looked for between the Congregationalists, Methodist Protestants and United Brethren; and others may follow. The "Fukuin Domeikwai" or Evangelical Alliance of the Japanese Churches, the Y. M. C. A., the Christian Endeavor and National Temperance Societies, the Sunday-school Association and other efforts, all on the line of coöperation, seem indicative of the fulfilment of the Lord's High-priestly prayer "that they may all be one."